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A Comparison of Disabled and Able-Bodied Athletes in Wheelchair Basketball

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**A COMPARISON OF DISABLED AND ABLE-BODIED ATHLETES
IN WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL.**

By

Kym Hoonhout.

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of**

Bachelor of Science (Sports Science) Honours

Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering

Edith Cowan University

November 1995

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons for participation and the benefits that the able-bodied and disabled subjects obtain from participation in the integrated sport of wheelchair basketball. A qualitative interview technique was employed to explore the athletes decision to participate and their reactions to the sport. Data was inductively analysed into categories which focused on the research questions. Consistent with other studies the subjects cited several reasons for participation with fun and enjoyment the most common response and challenge and the socialisation ranking next. The disabled were more competitive with winning being an important reason for them. The two groups accepted each other with the able-bodied acknowledging that they now regret previous negative attitudes toward the disabled. In competition, neither group felt the need to back down when going in for a ball with the disabled commenting that the able fear us more. In a community setting the sport was not well known and reactions varied between the groups. The able had positive reactions while the disabled felt many reactions were derogatory toward them. Sport was seen as a major area where attitudes of the community could be altered. Recommendations and research applications have been presented to help assist further investigation of the effects of integration and general sports participation on the disabled individual.

DECLARATION

"I Certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgment, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text".

Signature

Date 29/1/96

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

Wheelchair sports provides a social situation in which the disabled individual is able to develop a positive self-identity in the midst of the most personal crisis (Brasile, 1990). Wheelchair basketball is a sport of skill and challenge (Brasile, 1992). Kennedy, Smith, and Austin (1991, p.240) noted that most of the programs for disabled sport have regulations that prohibit non-disabled from competing against athletes who have disabilities. In Western Australia able and disabled athletes have competed together for many years, initially to obtain sufficient player numbers for teams, but later for the added challenge. The interaction between the two groups is invaluable for awareness and recognition of the abilities of the disabled (personal contact, Bill Mather-Brown, 27/9/95). The game is played in two 20 minute halves with the same basic rules and court measurements as able-bodied basketball. Additional rules have been developed to control the 'extra abilities' of the able-bodied athletes, such as a technical foul for lifting the buttocks out of the wheelchair.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions about the integration of able and disabled athletes who compete in an integrated combined wheelchair basketball competition.

There are few areas of modern society that are not influenced in some way by the presence of sport (Kennedy, et al., 1991, p.237). Knowledge of the rehabilitative benefits of exercise and the development of competitive sport for people with disabilities have been instrumental in fostering research in the area

(DePauw, 1988). Sport is an early step in the socialising and self-acceptance process. Presumably there are benefits to the individual and the wider disabled community from competition which include able-bodied athletes. Horvat, Roswal, Jacobs, and Gaunt (1989) state:

The increase in physical functioning, self-worth and alleviation of tension achieved from sports participation seems interrelated to the improvement in the psychological functioning of disabled athletes (p.206).

The onset of disability is seen to complicate the picture of initial sport socialisation (Williams, 1994). The needs and motives of athletes who have disabilities are often viewed as different from their non-disabled counterparts, and the primary emphasis of such competition is seen as rehabilitation (Kennedy, et al., 1991, p.238). A person with an acquired disability may use sport as an effective rehabilitation tool, but the plight of individuals with congenital disabilities presumably differs.

A further purpose of this study is to identify the personal incentives and perceived benefits of the two groups of athletes, able and disabled, who compete in the same wheelchair basketball competition.

Significance

To the able-bodied, wheelchairs represent a loss of function, whereas wheelchair users see the chair as a means to an end, that of mobility (Furst, Ferr, & Megginson, 1993). According to a study on actual and perceived

attitudes towards wheelchair users by Furnham and Thompson (1994) able-bodied groups were found to be aware of the lack of provision for the disabled, especially the lack of adequate facilities. The handicapped continue to be stereotyped as dependent, sad, emotionally unstable, and isolated (Altman, 1981 cited in Furnham & Thompson, 1994).

A fundamental reason for the absence of public awareness and interest in sport for people with disabilities is the widespread belief that such programs are solely "therapeutic" (Kennedy, et al., 1991, p.238). Considerable research on attitudes towards people with disabilities has established that they are consistently seen as being 'different' from other people (Furnham & Thompson, 1994). The major handicap of people with disabilities is not so much their own specific disability as the attitude of the non-disabled general public towards them (Furnham & Thompson, 1994).

Several factors working against disabled people have been identified by Sherrill (1986). One factor is stigmatisation. Stigmatisation occurs when the individual is perceived as different from the general population. Another factor is stereotyping, which means people being treated the same without any regard for their individuality. A third factor is prejudice. Athletes with disabilities wish to be judged on self-actualisation (optimal development of sport ability through long, hard training) rather than on their physical appearance and/or aesthetics of movement (p.22).

Hence it is important to determine how an integrated sport, such as wheelchair basketball aids in combating these factors and to determine the reasons the athlete's themselves give for participating in the sport and what they perceive to be beneficial, both personally and for the community.

Sport for the general, able-bodied population is vast in relation to the number of choices available to them. Few explanations have been offered to

explain why able-bodied athletes deliberately choose to compete in a wheelchair and how are they were accepted into the 'disabled' sport. Technically such participation is described as reverse integration. No research could be found which compared these two groups of athletes competing in the same team sport.

The findings are important because they identify personal benefits and personal experiences from participating in the sport. It is anticipated the findings will offer information on how sport can be an effective medium for social and personal acceptance of disability. It should also provide information and education to the wider community about how able the disabled really are in competitive sports and the benefits they see resulting from the integration of able and disabled athletes.

Information from this research could be beneficial to coaches, program developers, rehabilitation supervisors and sporting organisations contemplating integration of the able and disabled.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to identify the personal incentives and perceived benefits of two groups of athletes, able and disabled, who compete in the same wheelchair basketball competition.

Research Questions

The major question was:

What are the perceptions of disabled and able-bodied athletes about integration in a combined wheelchair basketball competition?

Sub questions of interest in answering the major question were:

1. Why do both able and disabled athletes chose to participate in an integrated competition?
2. How do the athletes accept each other as competitors in a reverse integration situation?
3. How is the participation in the sport accepted in social environments which include sporting settings or situations?

Limitations

The research study was limited by the following factors:

1. Low participation rates limited the number of subjects who met the study criteria: under two years participation; disability of paraplegia or lower limb amputation; and willing to participate in the study.
2. Disabled subjects had either congenital or acquired disabilities and therefore sample was not fully homogeneous.
3. Females were excluded due to insufficient numbers meeting the criteria for the study.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study were:

1. The sample was limited to only one competition in Western Australia.
2. Inclusion of only male able and disabled wheelchair basketball athletes.
3. Inclusion of only athletes disabled because of paraplegia or amputation of any lower portion of the body. No mentally handicapped subjects were involved in this research.

Glossary

Evolution of personal and organisational identity inevitably leads to conflict over ownership of such terms as wheelchair sports, paraplegics, and quadriplegics (Sherrill, 1986, p.23). When athletes and leaders are asked what they mean by integration, there will almost be as many different answers as there are persons in the room (Lindstrom, 1992). Throughout this thesis, Integration and Inclusion have the same meaning.

The glossary of terms presented here are those which used throughout the literature and this project.

Acquired Disability

An acquired disability is one which develops over time or occurs as a result of an injury to the individual which results in a permanent disabling condition.

Congenital Disability

A congenital disability is one for which the individual has symptoms from birth.

Disabled

A disabled person is seen to have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities; or who has a record of such an impairment; or who is regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities include walking, seeing, hearing, speaking or working (Block, 1995).

Enjoyment

Enjoyment is seen as an indication that participation has intrinsic value and provides a pleasurable experience (Battista, 1990).

Integration

Integration is the process whereby people with disabilities are able to share all community resources, including access to and involvement in all sports activities (Confederation of Sport for the Disabled, 1992, p.iv).

Reverse Integration

Reverse integration occurs when able-bodied individuals compete in sports designed for disabled athletes.

Parallel Competition

Parallel competition occurs at sporting events where able and disabled compete in similar events that run parallel to each other with no direct

competition between the two groups. Parallel competition enables mutual sharing of the competitive spirit among all athletes but avoids the inequities that might result from direct competition between athletes with and without disabilities (Kennedy et al., 1991, p.240).

Sport

Sport is a structured goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic (based on elements of play and games) physical activity (McPherson, Curtis, & Loy, 1989, p.15). Sport is best considered from several points of view and can be described in four ways: as a form of involvement; as a ludic physical activity; as a social institution; and as a cultural product (McPherson, et al., p.10).

Social Justice

Social justice means being treated the same as everyone else, as being part of the community (Bureau for Disability Services, 1992, p.6).

Socialisation

Socialisation is seen as meeting with people of similar or varied interests. Socialisation may occur in sporting settings or outside sport in a social setting within the community.

In addition to the technical, politically correct language, the athletes have their own jargon which they used in discussions with the researcher. Some examples of this jargon are:

Crip

An individual who is wheelchair bound.

Walker

A walker is an able-bodied person.

Stand-up basketball

Stand-up basketball refers to regular able-bodied basketball.

Summary

The introduction to the study provided an insight to the area that this research will address. Research to date is lacking in relation to the effects of integrated sport from the participants perspectives. This study aims to provide information which will benefit the community by presenting findings from the athletes themselves in response to the effectiveness of integration.

This research will examine the effects of integration in relation to those factors identified by researchers as having a negative effect on society such as stigmatisation, stereotyping and prejudice.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

One of the purposes of integrated basketball is to contribute to the acceptance and recognition of disabled athletes. Wheelchair basketball is viewed as having benefits for the individual, community, public relations, and personal relationships of those involved (personal contact, Bill Mather-Brown, September 29, 1995). There is, however, a lack of evidence to explain why able-bodied athletes choose to participate in integrated sport, and how they are perceived by the disabled.

The purpose of this review is to examine previous research on participation of disabled people as a background to studying the practice of integration and its meaning to both groups of athletes especially when they participate in the same sport/teams. The majority of the literature in the area of the disabled has been written by American researchers. To date most research has been quantitative in nature which results in minimal opportunity for the inclusion of personal responses from the athletes, however, according to Smith (1993) most research addressing sport and physical activity for the disabled has occurred in the last fifteen years.

This review will be presented under the following headings: (a) Theories of Participation, (b) Able-bodied Sport Participation, (c) Disabled Sport Participation, (d) Integration, (e) Concept of Reverse Integration, and (f) Policy, will be drawn together in a Conceptual Framework.

Theories of Participation

Theories have been developed to account for sport participation and motivation for the disabled. Many of the major Motivation Theories were not found to have been tested on disabled athletes and have therefore been omitted from this review. Examples of these major motivational theories include Harter's Competence Motivation Theory (1981) and the Social Exchange Theory (Smith, 1986).

A review by Sherrill (1986) cites two theories which have been explored in disabled sport participation. The first, Participation Theory, studied by Szyman (1980) considered the socio-psychological values of wheelchair sport participants. Subjects included polio and cerebral palsy as well as paraplegic athletes. Results indicated that leisure attitudes and well being caused participation rather than vice-versa (p.27). The second, Motivation Theory, tested by Cooper (1984) investigated the reasons why cerebral palsied athletes participated in sport. Cooper found the challenge of competition, fun and enjoyment, love of sport, fitness and health, and team sport atmosphere to be the major motivational factors in sport participation (p.25).

The research by Szyman (1980) and Cooper (1984) examined why disabled athletes participate in sports. Wheelchair basketball was not included in these studies. Neither study involved able-bodied athletes from whom to draw similarities or differences.

According to Maehr and Braskamp (1986, p.48) motivation is a process in which a person takes certain available resources, such as time, talent, and energy, and distribute them in the way they choose. Maehr and Braskamp explained this as Personal Investment Theory (PIT). PIT is a cognitive motivation theory which places emphasis upon the individual's thoughts,

perceptions and beliefs when discussing determinants of choice and persistence (Brasile, 1988). PIT is concerned with the four major personal incentives of mastery, competition, affiliation, and recognition (Maehr, 1984 cited in Kimiecik, Jackson, and Giannini, 1990, p.19). Maehr and Braskamp (1986, p.43) noted that individual beliefs, together with situation, social and cultural factors may affect personal investment. No research could be found which applied PIT to disabled sport participants.

Much of the research to date has involved psychological profiling which draw comparisons between the strengths and weaknesses of able and disabled athletes. An example of such research is that of Henschen, Horvat, and French (1984) who compared the two groups and found wheelchair athletes demonstrated more ideal psychological profile than did the able-bodied athletes, the 'Ice-Berg' Profile. This profiling involves scoring Profile of Mood States (POMS) below average on tension, depression, anger, fatigue, and confusion while scoring very high on vigor. Henschen, Horvat, and Roswal (1992) found that after testing the United States Olympic wheelchair basketball team and comparing results against able-bodied norms, the psychological functioning of the disabled was similar to their able-bodied counterparts in a variety of situations.

Research in the area of disabled sports is limited in relation to the application of theories and therefore provides an avenue for future research beyond the scope of this project.

Able-Bodied Sport Participation

Literature on the participation of able-bodied athletes has been available for many years. For this review a sample of recent research has been selected to illustrate the background of able-bodied athlete participation.

Wankel and Berger (1990) examined the benefits of sport and physical activity using Csikszentmihalyi's (1982) model of sport values. Four benefits of sports participation were identified: (a) personal enjoyment, (b) personal growth, (c) social harmony, and (d) social change. They suggested sport served as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, values, and norms, with a general acceptance that sport has positive value for the individual and the society.

A study by Battista (1990) on attraction to sport participation in racquetball indicated that subjects ranked motives for participation as enjoyment, competition, challenge, health and fitness, and self satisfaction. Friendship ranked high indicating that players valued the athletic experience because it enhanced their personal friendships. Battista's findings indicated that different levels and settings of activities could influence personal attitude toward sport and physical activity.

Iso-Ahola and Hatfield (1986, p.128) found that even competitive team sport activities promoted friendly and co-operative interaction as long as winning in general, and at the expense of others in particular was de-emphasised. Schellenberger (1990, p.66) also emphasised the importance of social relationships established by players during the course of training and competition. He found these to be important in team performance.

Able-bodied sport participation has been found to have enjoyment as a major factor for participation. Limited research was gathered in this area

because the focus of the study is on the disabled sport participants. No literature could be found that identified why able-bodied athletes participate in any disabled sport. Reverse integration has been identified by Brasile (1990) though to date has not been tested. This research study attempts to initiate research in this area.

Disabled Sport Participation

Many wheelchair athletes not only participate for the physical benefits of sport but also for the rehabilitation and recreational aspects (Horvat, French, & Henschen, 1986) with the benefits associated with physical activity extending beyond the physical domain into higher self-esteem and being happier than non-athletes (Valliant, Bezzubyk, Daley, & Asu, 1985).

An early study by Monnazzi (1982) examined the personality traits of athletic and non-athletic paraplegics. Findings indicated that paraplegics seemed to enjoy the attention they receive when simply considered "athletic" by others. There was no mention in this study on how the athletes were actually perceived by the non-disabled community. The current study will consider how the able-bodied individuals respond to the disabled athletes in settings outside the basketball court.

Sports, through voluntary choice, eliminate the boring repetition often associated with the usual rehabilitation exercises. By practicing sport, the paraplegic seems to recover part of his/her previous life, thus realising a partial recovery of his/her individuality (Monnazzi, 1982).

Campbell and Jones (1994) compared wheelchair sport participants and non-participants. Results suggested that participation in sports, whatever the

competitive level, caused a more positive mood and greater self-perceptions of health and well being. No comparisons were drawn between able-bodied athletes or non-athletes or their perceptions of how the athletes are accepted by the broader community.

Furst et al. (1993) studied questionnaires relating to previous and current participation in sport from paraplegic triathletes. Analysis showed that the majority had been active before the onset of disability and that encouragement and motivation provided by the availability of other disabled individuals was a major factor in the decision to exercise post-rehabilitation. Furst and colleagues found that paraplegic athletes were motivated to participate by other disabled athletes (77%), prior participation in the sport (50%), friends (27%), doctors/therapists (23%), and health concerns (18%).

Fun was identified by the paraplegic triathletes as the most common reason for competing (41%), followed by physical development / improved health (36%), love of competition (27%), and socialising (27%). These findings were consistent with results from studies of participation motivation on able-bodied athletes who reported that the primary reason for participation was fun (Gill, Gross, and Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz, and Weiss, 1985).

Vanlandewijck, Spaepen, and Lysens (1995) studied the relationship between the level of physical impairment and sports performance. Analysis of the videotaped wheelchair basketball games found that previous experience in the sport, motivation, tactical instructions, and other variables influenced overall performance in a game as complex as wheelchair basketball.

An example of a comparative study similar to the present study is that by Brasile, Kleiber and Harnisch (1991) which looked at the participation incentives among athletes with and without disabilities. The five participation incentive factors they identified were fitness, ego, task, social integration and

social affective. These were then categorised into three main levels: ego incentives are where one measures one's own skill against another's, task incentives which were seen as the pleasure of the activity itself (likened to Intrinsic Motivation), and social incentives which were of critical importance for the development of a commitment to leisure sports.

Conclusions were drawn that indicated that there appeared to be general similarities between able and disabled athletes. A limitation of this study is that the sports performed by the subjects were similar but not in the same competition. Basketball and road racing were chosen as similar comparative sports. Subjects did not engage in direct competition nor was there integration of the two groups.

Duda (1989) utilised the three main factors of ego, task and social incentives to demonstrate, using high school students, that an ego orientation was related to the perception that sport should enhance ones' self-esteem and status. Task orientation was related to the perception that sport should teach one to try ones' best and to be a good citizen. Results indicated intrinsic, task related reasons were of foremost importance for participation over external goals of winning or losing (Brasile et al., 1991; Brasile and Hendrick, 1991).

According to Valliant et al. (1985) competitive and recreational sports are an effective means of promoting disabled persons into the community. The study included male and female subjects who had various disabilities. Responses were limited to the options provided on the questionnaire. This limited the amount of input the athletes could have to the problems that relate to them directly.

Kennedy et al. (1991, p.238) believe the rehabilitative potential of sports is undeniable, but believe emphasising this aspect to the exclusion of the other benefits to the individual is unfortunate. Such emphasis merely strengthens the

public's view of individuals with disabilities as "different" or "abnormal" (Kennedy, et al., p.238).

Sport promotes participant growth and development, generates public awareness, and provides motivation for others (Kennedy, et al., 1991, p.255). Additional benefits include increased fitness, enjoyment, new skills, team membership, competition, acceptance of defeat, participation and integration with the community at large (Australian Confederation of Sports for the Disabled, 1992, p.3).

Sport participation research has been limited in the area of disabled sport. The major limitations of previous studies is the lack of personal input from the subjects. Through the qualitative paradigm the researcher feels that this neglected area of disabled research be addressed sensitively.

Integration

For the purpose of this study integration means being supported to participate in typical, everyday education, recreation, work, and family settings with ordinary peers in the community. In recreation, the focus of integration has been getting individuals into regular programs but to date results of this type of integration suggest that the overall impact upon peoples' lives has been limited (Hutchinson & McGill, 1992, p.114). Hutchinson and McGill identify seven meanings of integration: (a) establishing relationships with ordinary members of the community, (b) supported to participate in everyday settings, (c) moving from "clients" to the role of friend, citizen or leader, (d) interacting with ordinary citizens not just being physically present, (e) reallocation of segregated

resources for integrated use, (f) changing roles for recreational advocates, and (g) building competencies in the community so it becomes inclusive and accepting of diversity (p.113).

All the meanings of integration show benefits to the disabled in the community. The researcher believes the most important one is the seventh (g), though the other meanings combine to create community acceptance. When the community is accepting of diversity then the disabled may feel part of the community.

Disabled individuals who use a wheelchair have largely been neglected in the research concerned with attitudes towards people with disability (Furnham & Thompson, 1994). Integration is seen as an effective way of creating a positive impact on the perceptions of the able-bodied community. Furnham and Thompson (1994) studied attitudes of wheelchair users and non-users by using the Attitude Toward Disabilities Persons Scale (ATDP). They found many of the non-disabled subjects have had either very limited contact, or no contact at all with people who use a wheelchair. Results suggested that contact does have a beneficial effect on attitudes toward wheelchair users.

The able-bodied sample were only asked about their perceptions of wheelchair users. The sample in the current study actually compete in the wheelchair and have first hand knowledge of the chair and of disabled athletes. Lindstrom (1992) considered that an able-bodied person in wheelchair sport has no advantage over athletes with disabilities. This observation comes from first hand experience. He was an elite able-bodied athlete prior to becoming wheelchair bound.

Research suggests that many individuals do not consider athletes with disabilities as legitimate or real athletes (DePauw, 1988, Martin, Adams-Mushett, & Smith, 1995). Martin et al. used the Athletic Identity Measures

Scale (AIMS) to assess self-identity and social identity, and the Sport Orientation Questionnaire (SOQ) to measure competitiveness, win and goal orientations of elite swimmers with disabilities. Results suggested that sport participation is viewed as an effective tool in combating discrimination as the non-disabled population has an opportunity to see the "abilities" of those with disabilities.

The onset of disability complicates the picture of initial sport socialisation, when the disability is congenital, socialisation is a continuous process (Williams, 1994). Brasile (1990) found some authorities consider that participants are denied significant social and psychological benefits that result from meeting, sharing and becoming friends with non-disabled individuals who share similar interests. To be effective, social interaction between peers with and without disabilities should be on an equal level (Kennedy, et al., 1991, p.240).

Brasile (1992, p.240) offered a model of how the individual progresses from traditional rehabilitation and into a more cooperative, comparable, and integrated environment. The continuum is a scenario for considering the use of leisure participation in the successful reintegration of an individual who has experienced a life-altering circumstance (See Figure 1.).

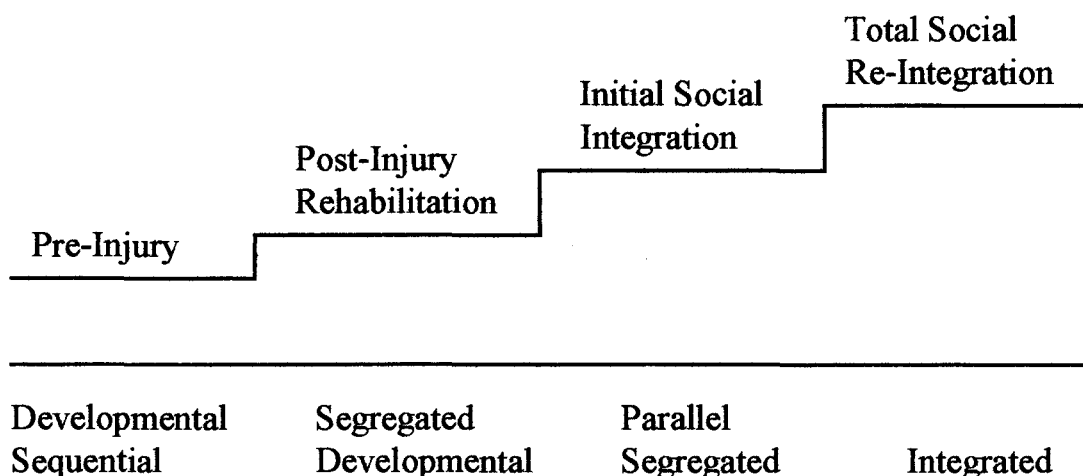


Figure 1. Social reintegration model.

(adapted from Brasile, M. (1992). Inclusion: A developmental perspective. a rejoinder to "examining the concept of reverse integration". Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly, 9 (4), 293-304.

Integration of able and disabled has been identified as having many positive benefits for the community. Studies have utilised normative tables and similar sporting activities or parallel competition, but none have explored how and why the able-bodied athlete choose to participate in the combined sport of wheelchair basketball.

Concept of Reverse Integration

Mainstreaming integration efforts have attempted to place the disabled individuals into 'normal' programs and legislation has been implemented in many Western countries to facilitate disabled access into able-bodied programs and sports.

Brasile (1990) identified a new perspective on integration, reverse integration. The notion advanced by Brasile focused on what effect might be observed by the inclusion of the non-disabled into what have traditionally been considered disability-specific programs. He queried why the able-bodied compete with and against the disabled in their programs and sports. In theory, an able person in a wheelchair has a comparable level of skill and mimics the disabled condition. Brasile contends that integrated competition in a wheelchair would attest to wheelchair athlete's competitive proficiency and less on the disability by focusing on the skill required to compete.

The premise is to promote active participation as well as develop an atmosphere for social integration where all participants compete on an equal basis. Years of practice from a disabled viewpoint may in fact be advantageous over the able-bodied athlete who only uses a wheelchair one or two times per week and does not undertake all daily tasks from the wheelchair.

Thiboutot, Smith, and Labanowich (1992) contended that reverse integration would reduce competitive opportunities for the disabled. They stated "the fundamental issue in this debate is identified: who will ultimately decide who is or is not eligible for participation in wheelchair sports in the United States?". Lindstrom (1992) considered that the credibility of the disabled movement is threatened by the participation of two-finger and two-toe amputees and persons with circulation defects as active medal-winning athletes in the

Paralympic Games. Lindstrom noted able-bodied athletes competing with athletes with disabilities in adapted sports is not integration and should not be introduced. However, parallel competition in which subjects compete in comparative sports, enables mutual sharing of the competitive spirit among all athletes, avoiding the inequities that might result from direct competition between athletes with and without disabilities (Kennedy, et al., 1991, p.240).

Since the late 1950's, the Western Australian Wheelchair Sports Association (WAWSA) has welcomed and encouraged 'reverse integration' in their basketball competition. Initially team numbers were so low that able-bodied athletes were encouraged to assist to make up the teams. WAWSA continues to utilise able-bodied athletes for this purpose and to provide additional pressure for skill development in training for national competition (personal communication, Bill Mather-Brown, 11 May, 1995).

Rules and policies control and guide able-bodied participation in State teams. No able-bodied players are permitted in the National team. Fairness in wheelchair basketball depends on team balance (Strohkendl, 1986, p.101). A points system is in place which controls the number of able-bodied athletes in any team. Each player is assigned a sport classification based upon functional ability and other factors with a numeric value of 1, 2, 3, or 4 under international rules (Strohkendl, p.101). A low lesion paraplegic may score a four, while a high thoracic lesion may only score a one. Under world rules teams cannot have a total of more than 14 points on the floor at any one time (Strohkendl, p.101). It may therefore be unproductive to play an able-bodied player at all even if they were permitted to participate at international level.

Reverse integration has been labeled by Brasile (1990) although the concept has been promoted and encouraged by the WAWSA for many years in their local competition.

Policy

Government and non-governmental agencies propose and implement policies to protect and enhance the lives of the disabled. There will always be the need for some forms of segregated sport for people with disabilities. The Australian Confederation of Sports for the Disabled (ACSD), are backed by the Australian Sports Commission. Their aim is to ensure that the disabled have every opportunity to participate and enjoy their chosen sport to the full (Australian Confederation of Sports for the Disabled, 1992, p.ii). The target of the Confederation (p.6) is to raise the awareness and educate the community that people with disabilities do and can participate in sport.

A Western Australian State Government policy, "A Fair Go for Everyone", provides a framework for government and community to advance the interests of people with disabilities (Bureau of Disabilities Services, 1992, p.6). The policy declares that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as do all other Western Australians. The Disability Policy parallels the definition of human rights adopted in the Commonwealth Disability Services Act and Equal Opportunities Commission Act 1986 (Bureau for Disabilities Services, p.6).

No single policy or program will provide the solution to the complex issues associated with ameliorating the impact of disability on the lives of the individual (Bureau of Disabilities Services, 1992, p.6). The individual organisations and associations need to set objectives and implement programs to advance the disabled into the community. The WAWSA, Ministry of Sport and Recreation, and Western Australian Disabled Sports Association (WADSA) produce guidelines and policies to assist in the advancement and recognition of

the disabled into the community. Each association may have a particular focus, though all aim to improve the lives of the disabled individual.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2. is a conceptual framework of how the athletes become involved in the sport of wheelchair basketball and the factors that may have an influence on their participation. Three groups were identified as potential participants to be introduced to the sport of wheelchair basketball. These groups are the able-bodied, acquired disabled and congenitally disabled. Congenital disabled covers those subjects who have been born with a disability. Acquired disability results through injury or disease. Sports are noted for the subjects as wheelchair basketball may not be the only sport of any particular athlete. From the range of sports available to both disabled and able-bodied, wheelchair basketball has been selected as the focus of this study.

Incentives and motives for playing will be individual though it is anticipated that a common theme will develop for the two groups. Personal perceptions about the integration of the athletes may also prove to have an effect on the participation of the subjects. The conceptual framework may require modification once the findings from the research have been established.

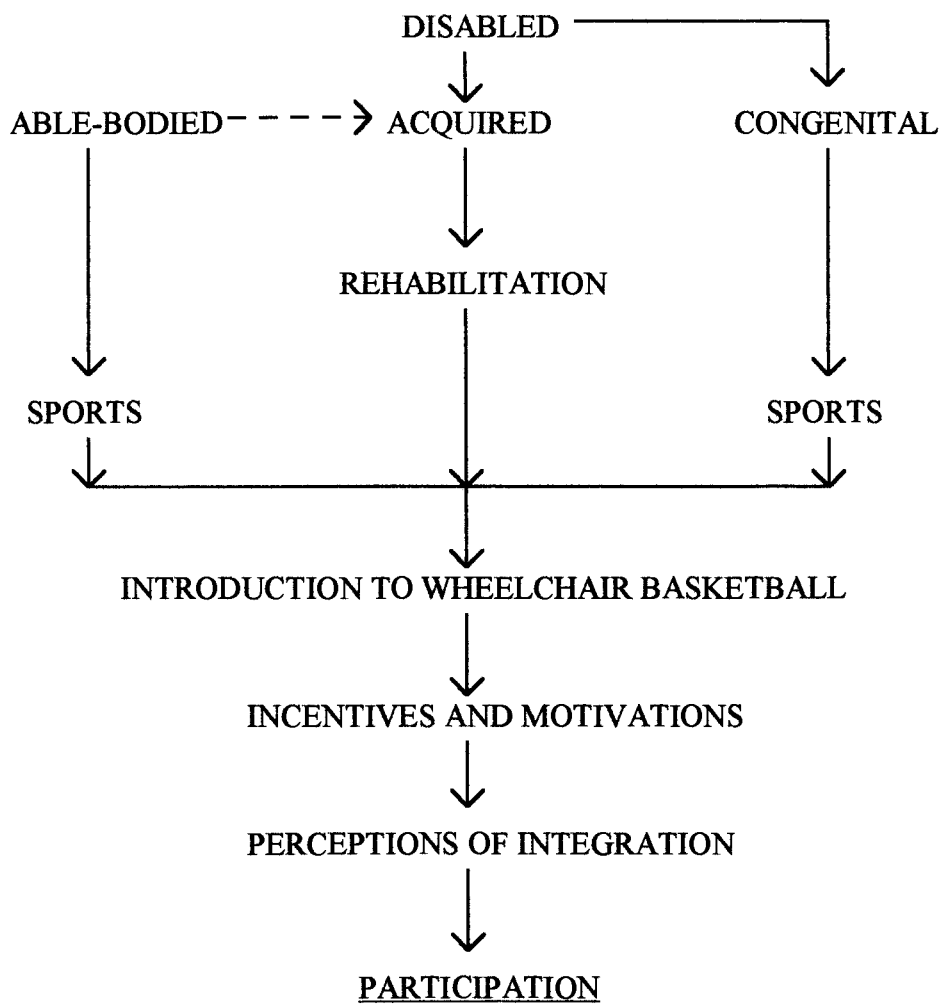


Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

Summary

Theories of participation relevant to disabled sport participation include Personal Investment Theory, Participation Theory and Motivation Theory. Research into disabled sport found that sport participation goes beyond the physical domain and the greatest benefit of sport is that it assists in improving community awareness of disabled people. Able-bodied sport participation studies found that personal enjoyment, growth, social harmony and change are the major positive benefits of sport. Motives for participation include enjoyment, competition, health, self satisfaction and friendship.

Comparisons between able and disabled in different sports have been made (Henschen, Horvat, and French, 1984; Shifflett, Cator, and Megginson, 1994) though no direct comparisons have been attempted within the same sporting competition. Research to date has been predominately quantitative in nature. The instruments used provide little if any personal perspectives from the athletes themselves. For this reason the study will seek personal experiences of both groups of athletes in a wheelchair basketball competition through the qualitative paradigm. This procedure will allow the athletes to describe what is important to them in relation to the topic. The aim of the study is to explore the benefits of integration in the sport of wheelchair basketball and how the two groups relate to and respond to each other in an athletic sense.

The state government policy 'A Fair Go for Everyone' complements the aims of the Australian Confederation of Sports for the Disabled. Both groups try to develop community understanding and acceptance. Local associations also promote the disabled into the community with the desire to improve the attitude toward the handicapped in society.

The integration of able and disabled has positive and, according to some, negative effects on the people it is trying to help. The majority find integration of able and disabled to have beneficial effects for both groups. Brasile (1990) provided a theoretical explanation for the concept of reverse integration which has been encouraged for many years at the Western Australian Wheelchair Sports Association. WAWSA has implemented rules and controls to limit the impact of incorporating able-bodied into disabled sport.

The conceptual framework provides a visual summary of the factors that influence the individuals decisions to participate in the sport of wheelchair basketball. Additional factors or modifications may be revealed through data analysis.

Overall, psychology research in the area of sport for the disabled was found to be fairly limited. It can be said the sport is seen to be an excellent medium for such integration to occur. Asken (1991) noted that sport for the disabled has moved from merely rehabilitation to true competition.

CHAPTER 3

Method of Investigation

Research Design

Previous research in the area of participation in disabled sports has been predominantly through quantitative questionnaire techniques (Brasile & Hendrick, 1991; Cox & Davis, 1992; White & Duda, 1993). Survey research based on the use of questionnaires, administered in face-to-face interviews, permits the collection of extensive data on each person questioned but in most instances the subject's responses are confined by the questions and there is little opportunity for respondents to present their own point of view (Brenner, Brown, and Canter, 1985, p.3). Scanlan, Stein and Ravizza (1989) advocate qualitative methods of investigation provide depth, detail, and allow subjects to be understood in their own terms.

Interviews provide the opportunity for participants to focus specifically on the areas of concern. The in-depth interview allows the researcher to "walk a mile" in the head of the subject (Patton, 1990, p.357). The aim of this research was to explore the views of athletes through their own opinions, using personal experience and explanation of what is of personal importance and not just answering questions set to the researcher's frame of reference. The individual therefore expresses what they felt is important for the researcher to know.

Sample

Six able-bodied athletes and six disabled athletes were chosen who were "new" to the sport. The athlete was considered to be 'new' if they only recently begun to participate or had only played for two years. They were also required to meet the criteria for the study presented below. 'New' players were chosen as initial feelings and reactions to integration, and personal motives for playing the sport were sort in the research. It was expected that over time, friendships would develop which could have an influence on the subject's initial reactions to the integration in the sport.

The Western Australian Wheelchair Basketball Association provide facilities and equipment for players at the Balcatta court. The competition consists of an 'A' grade, (State level players), and a 'B' grade level of competition which includes juniors. Teams are made up of male and female players of a wide range of ages. There is no minimum number of disabled or able-bodied players for any team.

Subjects were required to meet three overall criteria:

1. Currently competing in Wheelchair Basketball,
2. Relatively new to the sport: preferably less than two seasons of competition,
3. Willing to participate in the study.

As well the disabled subjects had to meet a second set of criteria for inclusion in the study:

1. Lower extremity disability such as paraplegia or an amputation.
2. No intellectual disability.

Through personal contact with game organisers and the coaches, "new" players, both able-bodied and disabled, were identified who fitted the criteria of

the study. The researcher approached these subjects directly and introduced himself. The purpose of the study was briefly explained. Why they had been identified was also stated in the face-to-face meeting. Each subject was given an introductory letter to take away with them to read (Appendix A.).

A follow up phone call, or direct approach at the following game, confirmed whether or not they would be involved. All subjects approached were eager to participate. Times for interviews were set, at which the consent form was signed (Appendix B).

Table 1. provides a brief profile of the able-bodied subjects which include previous sports and future sporting pursuits. 'Sporting desires' refers to the direction or goals that the individual wanted to pursue at the time of the interview. Profiles of the disabled sample are provided in Table 2.. Pseudonyms are used for all subjects. The code names begin with the initial of the sample group from which they belong, an example, Dave is a Disabled subject, and Alan is an Able-Bodied subject.

Table 1.

Able-bodied subject profiles.

Name	Age	Occupation	Sports	Sporting Desires
Adam	23	Station hand Labourer	football	get to 'A' grade WCBB
Alan	28	Rigger Timber trade	football squash sailing	motor sport have fun in WCBB
Andy	32	Farmer Truck/Bobcat Mines	football darts	socially play WCBB
Ashley	31	Plumber Firefighter	football cricket basketball	prove WCBB worthwhile have fun in a WC*
Alex	19	Apprentice Cabinet Maker	basketball football lifesaving 'T' ball	play WCBB for fun
Aaron	38	Sales Rep	none	WCBB first real sport

*WC: Wheelchair

Table 2.

Disabled subject profiles.

Name	Age	Disability	Cause	Sporting Desires
Don	27	Paraplegia	operation mistake	former Paralympian own + race drag car state team WCBB
Dan	27	Paraplegia	cyst on spine	social WCBB scuba diving
Dave	42	Paraplegic	car accident	state team WCBB*
Dion	18	Lower leg amputation	bone cancer	swimming or WCBB State and National level
Doug	21	Lower leg amputation	boating accident	wanted to play AFL* swimming or WCBB at Atlanta
Dean	24	Paraplegic	car accident	Paralympics in WCBB or track and field

* WCBB: Wheelchair Basketball

* AFL: Australian Football League

Data Collection

Interview

Data was collected primarily through open-ended semi-structured interviews. Patton (1990, p.278) found the in-depth interview allowed the researcher to enter into the other person's perspective. Tape recording the

interview improved accuracy of the collected data and allowed the interviewer to observe the interviewee's reactions (Scanlan, et al., 1989).

The interviewer must gain the confidence of the interviewees so they can speak more clearly, freely and truthfully. Not having previous contact with wheelchair basketball, the researcher regularly attended games and occasionally participated in training sessions. This allowed rapport to build, and gave a greater insight into the game and helped in the development of the interview schedule.

The researcher used an interview guide to gain similar information from each informant (Patton, 1987, p.111). Two versions of the interview schedule were utilised to accommodate the different backgrounds of the able-bodied (Appendix C) and disabled (Appendix D) interviewees. The guide consisted of primarily open-ended questions. Several probing questions were included to solicit more in-depth responses from the interviewees.

Initial questions on the interview schedule were designed to relax the informant and further build rapport. Questions then concentrated on why they participated in the sport, how they perceived others and how they felt they are being perceived. The subjects were asked why they participated in the sport, the personal benefits and what they see as the impact integration has on the community. The interview concluded with the interviewee putting forward their views and ideas about how to promote and develop the sport in the future.

For convenience and comfort, interviews were predominately performed in the subject's home. The 12 interviews were recorded with a Marantz audio system and averaged 25-30 minutes in length.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was performed on one wheelchair basketball player who had been competing for many years. The aim was to test the appropriateness of the draft format interview questions and the procedures for conduct of the interview. Analysis of the transcript identified where adjustments needed to be made in the procedure and the interview guide. Recommendations included making the questions easier to understand and therefore respond to. Also more detailed prompts were added to assist in gaining the most informative response from the subject. No data from the pilot study was used in this research.

Journal

After each interview the researcher wrote down the atmosphere of the interview and any major physical or emotional responses from the subject. The reflexive journal, as suggested by Douglas, Roberts, and Thompson (1988) allowed a record to be kept about how each interview proceeded and identified areas where refinement could occur in the interview schedule or methodology.

Analysis

The analysis was of an inductive nature, whereby relationships were allowed to emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on them (Scanlan et al., 1989) and with patterns and themes becoming apparent (Spradley, 1980). The first stage of the analysis was to transcribe the tape recorded interview.

Transcribing the interviews allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data. Notes were made during transcription of important issues and views. On completion, each transcription was checked against the audio tape for accuracy.

The researcher read each transcript several times. Interview questions were highlighted and compared to journal entries with meaningful or distinctive words and phrases being underlined. Interviewees' responses were then categorised into areas of similarity which answered the research questions. A sample of this coding can be seen in Appendix F.. Common themes and patterns between interviews were identified and noted.

Domains were developed when a response was repeated by more than one interviewee. An example of this category development would be Adam. He acknowledged that he found participating to be fun and enjoyable, but also a challenge. Alan also finds the sport fun, but winning is also important. The responses both identify fun as a factor. This is then categorised as a common theme. Any additional responses which are similar are placed into this section. Challenge and winning were noted and a separate category developed when other interviewees indicated that they like the challenge or to win.

When the transcripts were analysed, the categories were counted and tabulated into percentage responses of able-bodied and disabled subjects. These tables provide comparisons between the two groups in response to the major research questions posed in the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed verbally and in writing about the purpose, procedure and approximate length of their requirements for the study. Consent,

including recording of the interview, was obtained verbally at their acceptance of participation, and officially confirmed in writing by all parties prior to the interview commencing.

Each participant was informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. All those approached agreed to participate at a time convenient to them. Participants were assured that all data would be kept confidential, with pseudonyms used to report the findings. Data collected throughout the study was stored in a locked cabinet and will be kept for five years, after which it will be incinerated.

CHAPTER 4

Findings.

The major question guiding this research was: What are the perceptions of disabled and able-bodied athletes about integration in a combined wheelchair basketball competition? To explore this in depth, three sub-questions were posed. The aim of these questions was to provide additional information and to examine elements that may affect overall participation.

Through analysis of the interview transcripts it should be noted that many subjects expressed more than one answer to any given question. Probes and similar questions throughout the interview schedule allowed for in-depth and expansive answers. The aim was to gain as much information as possible from each subject. Therefore the tables often show that data adds up to more than 100 percent. An example would be, "I find the sport fun and enjoyable but also it poses a challenge". This example identifies fun and enjoyment as well as challenge as important for that individual athlete. During the analysis, the researcher placed all similar quotes that related into a set category. These responses were coded in relation to the questions that had been asked.

Reasons for Participation.

Sub-question 1. considered why the subjects chose to participate in integrated basketball. With many other sports available for the able-bodied person, what reasons do they advance for choosing an integrated sport over an all able-bodied competition? The interviewees gave five consistent reasons for

participation. All the able-bodied interviewees identified fun and enjoyment as the most important reason for participating. For example, one of the subjects, Andy, stated simply "I enjoy it". This remark was typical of all the able-bodied subjects. Mixing and meeting with other people was next in popularity from the able-bodied group (83 percent). In the subjects' own words, "the challenge of the sport" was identified in half of the interviewees. Exercise and competition rated as the next most common with 33 percent. Personal interest in the sport such as "to be a role model for my son", and "there is not as much pressure to run your heart out" were given by half of the able-bodied sample.

Interviews with the disabled subjects found that fun and enjoyment was the highest incentive for participation. All the disabled interviewees stated that they enjoy playing the game. The next most common reasons were: "wheelchair basketball helps me build self confidence" (33 percent) and it is a "challenge for myself" (50 percent). Socialising and interaction with people was reported by half the interviewees. The least reported reasons for participating was the catharsis of the sport and winning which both rated 33 percent. Don stated he "likes kicking ass". The only negative statement came from Dave with "there is not a lot of options". Doug believed "everything adds to your life experience".

The key points given by interviewees to sub-question 1. are summarised in Table 3. Throughout this chapter information in the tables is presented from the highest to the lowest percentage.

Table 3.

Reasons for participation.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u> (n=6)	Percent	<u>DISABLED</u> (n=6)	Percent
Fun and enjoyment	100	Fun and enjoyment	100
Mixing with people	83	Challenge for myself	50
Challenge	50	Social interaction	50
Personal reasons	50	Winning	50
Exercise	33		
Competition	33		

Comparisons of the two groups shows the incentive of fun and enjoyment rating as the top reason for participating. Mixing and socialising with other people rated second. Similar reasons for participating were competition and the challenge of the sport. The able-bodied sample had no desire to win which contrasts the responses of 50 percent of the disabled sample.

In the interview, subjects were asked how they would describe the sport of wheelchair basketball. The aim of this was to help determine their attitude toward the sport. The able-bodied sample described the sport as fast, fun and enjoyable (66 percent). Adam stated "You're in for a good time". Ashley added that "the sport is quick and more skillful than able-body basketball". Ashley clarified this by stating "you need to be able to bounce, pass and control the ball as well as move a wheelchair all with only two limbs". Alex felt that it is frustrating for people who live on their feet because "it takes a while to pick up

the game playing in a wheelchair". The able-bodied interviewees' reported that they do not hesitate to describe the game to other people if they genuinely seem interested in knowing more about the sport (33 percent).

The disabled interviewees explained the sport as fast and exciting (66 percent). One third of interviewees also described the sport as "basketball on wheels". It is seen to be almost as fast as able-bodied basketball but a bit rougher (33 percent). Alan felt that "You need all the normal basketball skills plus the chair skills". "You need to experience a game to appreciate it" was repeated in 33 percent of interviews. Dean believed "the game sells itself". Dave provided a very positive response, "simply losing your ability to walk should not stop you from playing competitive sport from the navel up". A summary of the how the subjects described the sport is presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Descriptions of the sport of wheelchair basketball.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u> (n=6)	Percent	<u>DISABLED</u> (n=6)	Percent
Fun, enjoyable, fast	66	Fast and exciting	66
If interested, explain it	33	Basketball on wheels	33
		Experience the game and will play	33

Data collected from the interviews revealed that playing the sport is something that all the subjects find fun. The researcher explored the possibility of what the subjects would do if they were unable to play the sport for any reason. For example, if they experienced poor health or had work commitments. Responses indicated that the able-bodied players do not know what they would play instead of wheelchair basketball (66 percent). The next most common reason was to "play something else" (33 percent). Alex and Aaron responded that they would play stand up basketball. Andy said "nothing, this is the only sport I play".

The responses from the disabled players indicated that half would put their time and money into something else. Swimming was the common sport participated in apart from wheelchair basketball (33 percent). Previous activity and sporting pursuits were identified by 83 percent of interviewees. Dave stated that, "I've always been physical and active". Prior to the onset of the disability, the disabled subjects played many sports. Football was the most common at 66 percent with swimming at 50 percent and stand up basketball rating third at 33 percent. Don is a former paralympian in track events, while Dean is training hard to become one.

The researcher wanted to examine what previous contact the able-bodied players had with disabled individuals prior to deciding to play the sport. This question was addressed in the interview with each of the able-bodied subjects. Analysis of the interview transcripts identified that prior to participation in wheelchair basketball, 83 percent had little or no contact with disabled people either socially or in a work situation. Alex is the exception in this group because his father is in a wheelchair and as a result he has had disabled people visiting his home since he was very young. Half of the able-bodied subjects had come into contact with a disabled person at school. This contact was noted to be often

negative toward that individual. These subjects mentioned that they now regret their previous attitude toward the disabled. One third of the able-bodied subjects have had no contact with disabled people that they can recall. Ashley has a young child with spina bifida and so has spent several years learning and meeting people in the disabled community.

The researcher became aware through observations and personal discussions that wheelchair basketball is not widely known as a competitive sport and was interested to learn how the athletes were initially introduced to the sport. The interviewer posed this question to all participants. The able-bodied reported that their introduction to the sport was predominately through friends who have played or seen the game (66 percent). The influence of a family member was identified by a third of able-bodied interviewees. Doug stated that he plays so he can participate in a sport with his father. Interviewees consistently noted that when they had been invited by friends to watch the game and tried the basics, as a result "they were hooked" (66 percent). Ashley summed up the majority of the interviewees by saying, "the biggest influence is having a go".

The disabled interviewees said they were influenced to participate predominately through older players and members of the Wheelchair Sports Association (83 percent). Dan felt that "Being grabbed on the street and asked down to the game is a fair influence to play". The interviewees commented that just watching some of the disabled athletes play is influence enough. Dave felt "they are inspirational, not only for the disabled but for everybody". According to Don, family had little to do with his participation in wheelchair basketball. Interviewees responded by saying that just having a go was a major factor in the decision to participate in the sport for 66 percent of the subjects. Dave felt that because wheelchair sport is still developing, there are not a lot of options apart

from basketball to compete in a disabled team sport. The influences on participation are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5.
Influences on participation in wheelchair basketball.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u> (n=6)	Percent	<u>DISABLED</u> (n=6)	Percent
Friends	66	Other players, Administrators	83
Having a go	66	Having a go	66
Family	33		

In summary, sub-question 1. found that both able and disabled subjects rate fun and enjoyment as the main reason for participating in the sport of wheelchair basketball. A major difference between the responses is that the disabled identify winning as a reason for participating while the able-bodied subjects did not.

The interviews showed that the sport is seen as fast and exciting with more skill required than for stand up basketball. The disabled subjects noted that most had been active in sports or had physical occupations prior to their disabling condition. Introduction to the sport occurred through friends for the

able-bodied athletes and from older players and wheelchair sport administrators for the disabled.

Relationship of Able and Disabled

The second sub-question considered how the two groups related to and accepted each other in wheelchair basketball. This relationship may affect participation through the interaction of the groups. All the able-bodied subjects claimed to "take no notice of disabilities" and accepted them as "normal human beings". "Good disabled players were treated like you and me, but they are better" (33 percent). When going in for the ball against a disabled player, 83 percent of able-bodied interviewees said they do not back down. Alan said that "if you did, they would probably be insulted". Alan made note that "if we weren't playing them we would have no-one to play".

In 83 percent of the disabled responses their aim is to get the ball if anybody on the opposition team has got it. The disabled sample felt that there is no need to go in any softer for the ball if they are able or disabled (66 percent). Interviews with the disabled subjects revealed that 50 percent felt that "the able-bodied fear us more because we live in the chair, they only play in it one hour a week". Fear is seen as a result of unfamiliarity. The disabled commented in a third of interviews that the able-bodied players seem to find it hard to pass, bounce and control the chair all at the same time. Doug felt "It gives you a kick to beat an able person" (33 percent). The only real advantage the disabled interviewee's could comment on was that "the able-bodied have better balance" which results in a better reach (33 percent).

Don noted that, "the able and disabled in our team get on really well, that is a major reason for our success in this competition". Only one interview produced a negative response to the able-bodied players. Dean believed the able-bodied should not be there at all. Table 6. summarises the responses of the interviewees toward each other in wheelchair basketball.

Table 6.

Player acceptance of one another in wheelchair basketball.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u> (n=6)	Percent	<u>DISABLED</u> (n=6)	Percent
As normal human beings	100	Someone else has the ball	83
No need to back down	83	Not back down	66
Like you and me	33	They fear us more	50
		Able can find it difficult	33
		Gives you a kick to beat an able-body	33

The researcher was interested to explore what contact the subjects had with a wheelchair prior to playing sport in one. Two able-bodied subjects had used a wheelchair in hospital after one broke his leg and another broke an ankle. This previous contact with a wheelchair was for only a short period of time

while the injury healed. The findings show that all the able-bodied interviewees had their first major contact with a wheelchair at wheelchair basketball.

The sport wheelchair used by the basketball players differs markedly from those used for everyday activities. The sports wheelchair has a smaller seat, narrower rear axle and is shorter in length than a general hospital chair. The result is a chair that has a high centre of gravity and is very maneuverable but fairly unstable .

The responses to the question on previous contact with a wheelchair indicated that the able-bodied subjects felt different and peculiar in the wheelchair (83 percent). The process of learning was scary for one third of respondents because "the chairs are light and tippy, but you soon get used to it". Aaron has been in contact with a wheelchair all his life as his father is disabled. He has grown up with access to a wheelchair and yet still felt "it takes time to adjust to play sport in one".

It was no surprise that the disabled interviewees all had their introduction to a wheelchair in a hospital setting. Half the subjects use crutches or a prosthesis and so do not use a wheelchair for everyday mobility. The remaining 50 percent of interviewees are paraplegics and state that the chair is "a big part of my life". Dave has only recently been confined to a wheelchair after his accident in late 1994. He commented that he, "took to it like a duck to water, although I try to come to terms with it day by day". The technology in wheelchair design is of great importance to these subjects. Dan noted that a good sports chair "has to fit you like a good shoe" with Dion complementing this by saying "it should be properly adjusted for your body size".

After exploring the initial introduction to the wheelchair in a sporting situation the researcher asked how the experiences of the subjects had changed over the time that they had been participating. The able-bodied interviewees felt

they had gained better skills and control (83 percent) but Adam stated, "I still fall out more than a disabled person". Half of the able-bodied players mentioned that they felt more confident in the chair but want more time to "get good". Aaron felt that he is as good as any other able-bodied player, but no able-bodied interviewee identified themselves to be better than the disabled athletes. "They live in the chair, we only muck around in it one hour a week", said Alan. Thirty three percent of the able-bodied players noted that "amputees would have a little trouble as they would need time to adjust their balance". Eighty three percent believe the disabled players have the advantage in chair and playing skills as a result of greater exposure to the wheelchair. Ashley made the point, "see, the same way I don't have to think about walking, they don't have to think about controlling the chair".

The disabled interviewees suggested that there is a lot more to a wheelchair than just wheeling along (50 percent). Eighty three percent acknowledged that the sport of wheelchair basketball allowed for skill, balance and confidence to develop. Time was shown to be the factor one third of the disabled sample felt governed development of wheelchair skills and the technical aspects of the sport. Doug felt "the biggest thing to do is maneuver around people". Table 7. summarises where the initial contact that the interviewees had with a wheelchair occurred and their attitudes/reactions to the chair.

Table 7.

Participants experience with a wheelchair.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u> (n=6)	Percent	<u>DISABLED</u> (n=6)	Percent
WCBB* major contact	100	Hospital setting	100
Peculiar experience	83	Major part of life	50
Light and tippy	33	Technology important	50
Time you get used to it	33		
Hospital initial contact	33		

In summary, sub-question 2. showed that the two groups of athletes have positive attitudes toward each other. Neither group back down when going in for a ball. The able felt the disabled would probably be insulted if you did.

Social Acceptance of Wheelchair Basketball.

The third sub-question looked at how the sport is accepted in a broader social setting including sporting settings. What are the reactions of people when the subject tells them that they compete in a combined wheelchair basketball

competition? Public perception and reaction to the sport may have an impact on personal participation in the sport. Two thirds of the subjects interviewed mentioned that people they have told had never heard of wheelchair basketball. Interviewees suggested that people are surprised that able-bodied even play a disabled sport (66 percent). Half of the interviewees agreed with Aaron, that "most people wonder why I am doing it". People often just chuckle (33 percent) while Adam stated "most people are really positive toward it". Ashley commented that he has had no negative responses at all to him playing the sport. Adam found that he is "being asked all the time how to get into wheelchair basketball". He responds with praise for the sport and invites them down to see the game played.

The reaction to the sport in a broader social setting, including sport, from the disabled interviewees provided varied responses to those given by the able-bodied sample. "Most people don't realise disabled people even play sport", or "they patronise you" rated in two thirds of answers. Fifty percent of the disabled interviewees stated that, "people are surprised that able-bodied play the sport". People ask a lot of questions (50 percent) and "spin out" a bit (33 percent) were given as responses to disabled subjects acknowledging to other people that they participate in wheelchair basketball.

From the responses given by the disabled it can be seen that they perceive reactions to be more negative toward their participation than for the able-bodied players. The responses from people may be due to the public perception that sport for the disabled is for rehabilitative purposes and not for the other benefits of sport such as challenge. Stereotyping and stigmatisation may play a part in the impact on how the sport is viewed in the community. Patronising occurs, according to Don, in the context of "Oh, its good to see you having a go". Dion said he is often asked "if they lower the ring" and Dan is

asked "how they slam it". Table 8. provides a summary of the reactions that interviewees have received to revealing their involvement in wheelchair basketball to a social group of people.

Table 8.
Reaction to wheelchair basketball in a social setting.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u> (n=6)	Percent	<u>DISABLED</u> (n=6)	Percent
Never heard of it	66	Disabled play sport?	66
Why are you doing it	50	Surprised	50
Chuckle	33	Ask a lot of questions	50
		'Spin out'	33

The inclusion of able into disabled sport is designed to aid in a wider acceptance of the disabled. The researcher questioned the subjects about the social aspects within the sport. According to the able-bodied interviewees there is no contact with other wheelchair basketball players apart from the game or training. The disabled subjects presented similar responses to those of the able-

bodied subjects. This suggests that they also have limited contact with either group of players outside the basketball court. Ashley was friendly with a disabled wheelchair basketball player prior to commencing the sport and still sees her socially. It must be noted that two thirds of the able-bodied subjects had only been playing for a matter of weeks when interviewed.

Disabled participants' responded to this question by noting 83 percent had limited social contact with people from their own or other teams. A typical response was, "We are good mates but we don't see much of each other outside the basketball court" (33 percent). Even though Dan is a partial paraplegic he does not have much contact with disabled people at all apart from his participation in the sport. In common with the able-bodied athletes, two thirds of the disabled subjects have only very recently begun to play the sport. The short period of involvement would limit the socialising aspect of the sport.

With facilities for the spectators being limited at the basketball arena, the researcher was curious about who came to watch the subjects play. The able-bodied sample ranked family the highest at 83 percent. Friends came in second with 50 percent of interviewees noting these spectators occasionally came to watch them play. Ashley and Aaron stated "If we play an early game or we make the finals then our young kids will come to watch".

The disabled sample identified friends in 66 percent of interviews with family mentioned by half the interviewees. Dave is very new to both the sport and the wheelchair and stated "as yet nobody comes to watch me play". Dion aims to invite friends down when he gets better at playing the game.

During the interview the subjects were asked how long they intended to participate in the sport. Fifty percent of the able-bodied interviewees suggested they would continue for at least another season. The other half said, "as long as I enjoy it and am interested". Alex summed up most of the responses by stating,

"when it is not fun anymore I will give up, but I can't see that happening for a while".

In one third of disabled interviews, health was identified as a major factor which may affect their continued participation in the sport. Dion and Doug made note that they have a choice of pursuing basketball or swimming in the future. Doug felt he would like to play "for many years as there are people over forty playing the game competitively".

With fun and enjoyment identified by the interviewees as the most common reason for participation, the researcher was interested to know if the interviewees recommend the sport to other people. All subjects recommend the sport when the opportunity arises and half of the interviewees from both groups invite people to come down and have a look. Aaron pointed out that "when they do they enjoy it". Thirty three percent of able-bodied interviewees felt that "it is good to get away and try something different". According to one third of able-bodied interviewees they believed they could have made another three teams with the number of people who are interested.

All the disabled interview responses indicated that they also recommend the sport to people as often as possible. Don summed up the responses by stating he recommends it to people all the time. One third of the disabled subjects are already recruiting people for competition next year. Dave "can't think of anything better, it keeps you out of trouble". Thirty three percent of the disabled interviewees commented that sport should be a huge part of everyone's life. All the subjects felt that the Wheelchair Basketball Association were not promoting the sport widely enough therefore limiting the positive benefits to be gained from integration.

Wheelchair basketball is recognised as a disabled team sport but there should be other sports that could be adapted to encourage integration. The

researcher explored this notion by asking what the subjects knew of other team or individual integrated sports. The able-bodied interviewees could only identify the individual sports of tennis and pool. Wheelchair basketball was the only team sport all the able-bodied knew. The disabled sample could not provide many more examples of integrated sports. Dave suggested rifle and pistol shooting, while Don noted that some track and field events are mixed in Europe. No new team sports were identified by either group of interviewees. Dion stated, "the best chance for sport for the disabled is from swimming and wheelchair sport". Doug mentioned that recently "football [Australian Rules] has made an allowance for amputees in low grade competition".

In summary, sub-question 3. found the social acceptance of wheelchair basketball to vary between the two groups. The able-bodied players reported that many responses are positive toward their participation, while the disabled players commented that negative statements were the more common responses.

Few spectators attend the games. Family and friends are the main supporters, however the interviewees had only been participating for a short period of time when they were interviewed. The able-bodied cannot see a long term future in the sport, while the disabled felt they will stop when physically unable to play. All subjects promoted the sport though they felt the organisation was letting the sport down with limited promotional activities. Apart from wheelchair basketball no subject could provide the researcher with any new, or team sport which had the potential for adaptability for integration to occur.

Perceptions of Integration.

Having explored the background of the athletes through the three sub-questions the major research question will now be addressed. It focused on the perceptions of disabled and able-bodied athletes about integration in a combined wheelchair basketball competition. To adequately answer the question it is first necessary to determine what the term 'integration' meant to the athletes. Then their attitude toward integration will be presented.

The athletes were found to hold a good understanding of the term integration. Ashley felt that integration means "making a bit of an effort to let other people join in, if that means that everybody is inconvenienced to let more people in, then so be it". One third of able-bodied interviewees reported that integration of the sport meant getting able-bodied people into a wheelchair to help even things up, with the result being that all the players feel that much more equal. Thirty three percent believe there needs to be an infrastructure to allow everybody to compete to their capability or desires. Two subjects could not provide information relating to what integration meant to them or provide a definition for integration even with additional prompts and probes.

The disabled subjects had varied responses to the term integration. Dan believed "integration means different people of different abilities coming together to play in the same sport for the purpose of competing and having fun". A repeated comment of disabled subjects was that "it is good to see the able-bodied competing because without their support the field would be small which would be detrimental to disabled sports". A similar percentage of disabled interviewees made note that "integration helps in aiding community awareness by proving you don't have to look down on them or sympathise for them". Doug summarised the feelings by stating, "it brings everything together, the more you

mix it the better it is for everyone". Table 9. summarises the meaning of integration gained from the interviewees.

Table 9.
Meaning of integration given by interviewees.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u>		<u>DISABLED</u>	
(n=6)	Percent	(n=6)	Percent
Feel equal	33	Need able-bodied support	33
Compete to capability	33	Community awareness	33
Not able to define	33	Mix with people	16

Competing in the integrated sport of wheelchair basketball means the players need to be aware of their own personal biases and attitudes. The major research question explored how the two groups felt about playing the sport from able-bodied and a disabled player view points. Sixty six percent of the able-bodied sample stated that "playing in an integrated sport does not phase me, the disabled guys do better than us anyway". Adam felt "it gives them a boost to beat an able-bod". One third of the able-bodied interviewees indicated that they felt the disabled athletes were pleased to have someone to compete against. Alan noted that their inclusion created an extra challenge for the disabled

athletes. Aaron added that "the extra challenge that the able-bodied bring gives the disabled players something to strive for". Half the able-bodied interviewees commented that integration of the two groups provided more competition for the disabled athletes. Ashley made mention that "the rules of the sport and of the governing body prevent the able-bodied portion of athletes having too much advantage over the disabled or taking over the sport completely". Rules such as not lifting the buttocks out of the chair and a foul being called for putting feet out on the ground limit the benefits the able-bodied might gain from their legs.

The integration of able and disabled in a sport such as wheelchair basketball helps to break down stereotypes of people with disabilities. This comment was given by one third of interviewees. Fifty percent of the able-bodied interviewees felt that it is good for them [the disabled] and it helps them to be treated more like equals. Similarly in half of the interviews it was felt that sport participation proves how able the disabled really are and how the able-bodied population need not feel sorry or pity them.

The attitude toward the disabled was very positive. Adam felt that it would be beneficial to have a disabled player on his team. Ashley mentioned that he often tells the disabled on his team that, "I'm the one that is disabled, you are used to the wheelchair". Ashley justified this by stating, "the disabled know how to bounce a ball, steer, push, turn, stop, all with just two hands, I need more than two hands for all that".

Responses from half the disabled sample reported that the combined sport of wheelchair basketball allows the able-bodied population to see that disabled people can achieve and do things for themselves. According to Dave, "the able take time to play sport with us when there is so much else to choose from, that's good". Thirty three percent of disabled players noted that integration helps to bring mutual respect to both groups. The able-bodied soon

learn how hard it is to shoot from the floor. Dean said, "integrating the two groups of athletes helps with community awareness" by breaking down stereotypes (33 percent). Doug believed, "the more they mix it the more it will prove that disabled people can look after themselves".

The disabled interviewees mentioned that physically the able-bodied have certain advantages over the disabled players, even with the added rules and restriction of the wheelchair. Dave stated that "the able-bodied are so far ahead in areas of balance that the disabled are always behind the eight ball". This sentiment was echoed by a third of disabled players. Although some of the athletes felt this way, Dave believes, "it would be detrimental to *all* if the able-bodied players were not allowed to compete with the disabled". The only strong belief that the able-bodied should not be there came from Dean. He believes "that all the players should be in wheelchairs", but he does not feel the able-bodied have any great advantages over the disabled in the game apart from a greater reach. From the review of the disabled transcripts, it can be seen that 83 percent of the interviewees have no problems competing with able-bodied players in their sport. The reactions of interviewees to integration are presented in summary form in Table 10.

Table 10.

Integration in Wheelchair Basketball.

<u>ABLE-BODIED</u>		<u>DISABLED</u>	
(n=6)	Percent	(n=6)	Percent
Does not phase me	50	No problem with able	83
Make more competition	50	Prove can achieve	50
Treat more as equals	50	Gain mutual respect	33
Proves disabled are able	50	Helps break stereotypes	33
Someone to play	33		
Helps break stereotypes	33		

In summary, the major research question identified that there are a number of benefits for the disabled as a result of integration. The able-bodied believe that playing the sport helps to make the disabled feel more equal, while the disabled see the able-bodied as essential for them to have an effective competition.

The able-bodied subjects see the disabled athletes as competitors in a sporting arena. They do not see the disabilities and treat the disabled as normal people. The disabled felt that integration helps prove that they can achieve. Additional benefits include gaining mutual respect and breaking down stereotypes.

Overall both groups were positive toward each other and positive toward the combining of the able and disabled in the competition of wheelchair basketball.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Wheelchair basketball offers disabled people the opportunity to play a competitive team sport. Able-bodied participation in a disabled sport would therefore have an impact upon the competition. This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter. Comparisons will be drawn between the information shared by the interviewees and the available literature. At the end of each section there is a brief summary tying the findings to the Conceptual Framework (Figure 2.).

Overall the findings indicated that able-bodied participation in wheelchair basketball has a number of positive effects for the disabled. Examples of these benefits include more competition, greater socialisation opportunities, and an avenue for greater community awareness toward disabled sport.

Perceptions of Integration

Wheelchair basketball is a team sport which involves the integration of able-bodied athletes and the disabled. Their individual perceptions and meanings of integration have been placed into sets of responses (see Table 9). The perceptions of the sport were gained through several questions on how the subjects see the sport and what they believe integration to be. The reactions to, and purpose of integration, indicated that the interviewees involved in the sport have a good understanding of what the aims of the competition are. These responses from subjects included, "getting the able-bodied in to even things up",

and "it helps community awareness by proving you do not have to look down on them or sympathise for them". The ideas that were common revolved around the notion of bringing different people together to play in the same sport for the purpose of competing and having fun.

The researcher has concluded that the sport allows athletes to become involved in something that initially many have little idea about. By competing, the individual learns about the need for activity and the many benefits that can arise from integration. The able-bodied players provided responses which showed how their participation benefited the disabled. These included personal growth, direct competition, and assisting through breaking down community stereotypes and prejudices. This finding is consistent with Wankel and Berger (1990) who found sport has the potential to serve as an agent for social change. Some of the able-bodied athletes cited personal reasons for their participation. One competes with his paralysed father, the other is proving to his son that being disabled does not mean you cannot be active in sport. Integration allows people who could not generally perform sport with their disabled family member the opportunity to do so.

The disabled realise that the able-bodied subjects go out of their way to play the integrated game of wheelchair basketball. Feelings of appreciation were expressed toward the able-bodied players. The disabled acknowledged that without them in the sport, they would have limited opportunity to play due to the low number of disabled athletes. Many disabled subjects believed that not allowing the able-bodied athletes to compete would be detrimental for disabled sports. This contradicts the view expressed by Thiboutot, et al. (1992) who are not in favour of reverse integration. They believe that integration of the able into disabled sport would restrict the amount of competitive opportunities for the

disabled in their own sports. The disabled athletes in this study, enjoy and encourage able-bodied athletes to play the sport.

The concept of reverse integration discussed by Brasile (1990) has had the effects that it was anticipated to produce. These include building a greater public awareness, socialisation and better competition for the disabled. Negative aspects of the concept were not uncovered by this study. There was only one subject who wanted only disabled athletes to play the sport, but he contradicted himself by stating that he "enjoyed playing against the able-bodied players". The sport has utilised reverse integration for many years prior to Brasile labeling the concept in literary terms. The Western Australian Wheelchair Sports Association has provided the players with an infrastructure which allows for positive interaction between two groups. These findings are consistent with Lindstrom (1992) who believed the process of integration requires policies and strategies to influence common attitudes. It should be noted that even though the disabled are seen as a different group in this study, the only difference in this sport is that they cannot get out of the chair at the end of the game.

The understanding of integration from the athletes in the sport of wheelchair basketball showed that they enjoy the interaction and that the combining of different people should be encouraged in more areas of the community. Subjects concurred with each other in respect to the notion that the more people mix, the better it will be for everyone in the long term.

Integration of able and disabled is designed to bring two sets of athletes together for the benefit of both. The able-bodied subjects had no problem competing with the disabled. They often stated that they do not even see the individual's disability, they are seen as just another player to get the ball from. They felt that it helps the disabled to feel equal, even more able than the able-

bodied players because they are competing at the their level in their sport.. It allows them the opportunity to compete at the best of their physical capabilities.

Benefits identified by the subjects include how integration allows the disabled to have more people to compete against, which in turn provides greater training pressure and improved skill development. Many subjects commented on how integration allows the able-bodied community to see how 'able' the disabled really are. The result of this helps the wider disabled community in relation to breaking down stereotypes. More able-bodied involvement would allow for greater acceptance of the disabled as true athletes and as normal everyday people. The able players mentioned that if they did not play the disabled, who would they play. Overall the able-bodied sample were very positive toward their participation and the benefits that integration in this sport provides for both groups.

In summary the able and disabled integration in the sport of wheelchair basketball has many positive effects for both groups. The able get to play a fun game which proves how able the disabled really are. The able-bodied players indicated that by bringing different people together, education and respect result. Breaking down stereotypes, gaining respect, treating people more as equals and providing competition were the main benefits identified by the subjects in this study.

The athlete's perceptions of integration governs their decision to participate. The conceptual framework (Figure 1.) has participation as the end result of an individual's progression through from the introduction of the sport. Incentives and motivations will affect participation. These may include fun and enjoyment, personal reasons, or for the challenge. The perceptions of integration will also have an effect on the decision to participate in the sport. The individual needs to see a positive result from their involvement. Benefits outweigh any

negative impact of their involvement. The participation of the individual would then come down to actually having a go. The responses from the interviewees suggest that once you have had a go, you are "hooked".

Reasons for Participation.

This section refers to sub-question 1. The reasons for competing are discussed in relation to able and disabled wheelchair basketball participation. All interviewees acknowledged that they play the sport of wheelchair basketball for fun and enjoyment. This finding agrees with those of Battista (1990), and Furst et al. (1993). Battista examined the personal meaning of sports participation using male and female able-bodied racquetball players. His analysis of the questionnaires revealed that fun and enjoyment was their primary motivation. Furst et al. examined paraplegic triathletes and found fun to be the highest ranked reason for participation. Findings from the current study were consistent with Battista and Furst et al. although neither of these studies utilised able and disabled within the same sport. Results suggest that integration has a positive impact upon the able-bodied athlete's attitude toward disabled.

Responses from the wheelchair basketball participants in this study closely matched the responses gained by Furst et al. (1993). Health is a major variation between the two studies. However, it must be said that triathlon is acknowledged to be a health and fitness oriented sport. Wheelchair basketball was not seen to benefit the interviewees to the extent that they felt that health was an important reason for participation.

The present investigation suggested similarities between the groups in relation to their reasons for participation. The comparison of able and disabled

responses shows more similarities than differences in relation to their group motives for competing in the sport (refer Table 3.).

The major notable variation between responses given by the subjects in this study was the concept of winning. This incentive was displayed by the disabled athletes but not mentioned by the able-bodied. Half the disabled players felt that winning is a major part of the attraction to the sport. "I like to win" was a common statement in the disabled interviews. The emphasis on winning contradicts findings by Brasile, et al. (1991). Their study examined able and disabled participation incentives based on Personal Investment Theory in track and field, road racing and wheelchair basketball. They found that intrinsic, task related reasons were foremost in wheelchair sport participant's motives for competing over external goals such as winning. The task incentive goals included just being involved in the activity and personal benefits. Findings of this study lean more toward task incentives for participation, apart from the disabled focus on winning. Brasile et al. concluded that able and disabled athletes have more similarities than differences for participating in sport. This is confirmed by the responses from interviewees in relation to their participation in wheelchair basketball.

It should be noted that all athletes interviewed want to have fun when they play the sport. The disabled placed a greater emphasis on the competitive aspect of the basketball. They view the sport more as an avenue for release of tension and aggression. This is consistent with the findings of Campbell and Jones (1994) who compared wheelchair sport participants and non-participants. They found wheelchair sport non-participants had higher levels of anger which were attributed to frustration due to their environment and other stresses. Valliant, et al. (1985) and Campbell and Jones (1994) also found that disabled athletes have higher self-esteem and are happier than disabled non-athletes. Wheelchair

basketball should therefore be seen as a sport for the effective release of stress by providing an arena for skill and mastery to occur, as well as for direct physical contact with each other and able-bodied athletes.

The able-bodied subjects did not mention winning as a reason for participation. Analysis of the interviews discovered that many felt they compared positively to other able-bodied athletes, but none compared themselves to the ability of the disabled players. Reasons included the fact that many "disabled people live in the chair, we only play in it one hour a week". Had the researcher probed deeper into the concept of winning as a reason for participation, it might have been uncovered that the able-bodied subjects also have the desire to win.

One answer may be the fact that much time and money is put into the sport by the disabled competitors. The disabled players use their own chairs while the able-bodied play once a week in a sports chair provided at the venue. The able-bodied investment in the sport is therefore seen as minimal. They could leave any time to play any able-bodied team sport they choose. The importance of the basketball as a sport for the disabled is confirmed by the way they put effort into playing and promoting the sport.

The idea of a greater personal investment on the part of the disabled can be seen through their willingness to tell other people how good the sport is. Able-bodied athletes were found to only tell other people about the sport if the people "seem genuinely interested" (see Table 5.). Other players were suggested as the main influence for participation. This is consistent with the findings of Furst et al. (1993) who found that in triathlons, other disabled people got most of the subjects involved. Able-bodied participation was similarly influenced by personal contacts who had played or had seen the sport and "thought it looked great".

The importance placed on the sport from the disabled sample may be due to the lack of other sports that they can play as a team. Wheelchair basketball is

good for the disabled because the number of sports for the disabled is fairly limited. This notion was confirmed by the subjects through the lack of other team sports, or sports that they thought could be modified for integrated competition. Personal investment in team sport activities for the disabled is limited to wheelchair basketball at the moment in the local Western Australian disabled community.

In summary, all the subjects play the sport of wheelchair basketball for the fun and enjoyment that the sport provides. In relation to the conceptual framework (Figure 1.), introduction to the sport varied for the able and disabled subjects. Friends influenced the able-bodied and other players influenced the disabled athletes. The disabled have identified their limited opportunity for such team sport, so subjects who acquired their disability could have been encouraged to participate as part of their rehabilitation program. Their introduction to the sport and their socialisation at the competition will also be influenced by the cause of the injury (refer Figure 1.).

Incentives and motivations were for the fun of the sport, winning, and the release of stress. The able-bodied seemed to place less personal investment toward the competition, whereas the disabled were more passionate about the game. The individual will progress down the conceptual framework with slightly varied emphasis. The reasons given for participation may be similar for the two groups though the introduction to wheelchair basketball for an individual with an acquired disability would be directly affected by their rehabilitation program and personal acceptance of their disability. Other sports have not been shown to greatly affect the participation of any of the subjects.

Relationship of Able and Disabled

How the athletes accept each other in a reverse integration setting was the focus of sub-question 2. It was found that both groups favour able-bodied inclusion into wheelchair basketball. The positive benefits of education and acceptance suggested that integration helped the able-bodied community see the disabled as competitors and achievers. The result of inclusion and education is the breaking down of stereotypes and stigmatisation against the disabled.

Playing the integrated sport of wheelchair basketball generally meant the able-bodied subjects had addressed personal biases and stereotypes in relation to the disabled. Through exploring the previous contact of able-bodied subjects with disabled people prior to their wheelchair basketball participation, the researcher discovered that most of the able-bodied subjects previously had little or no contact with disabled people. This concurs with the study of Furnham and Thompson (1994) who found that many non-disabled people had either very limited or had no contact at all with disabled individuals.

A possible explanation may be that the able-bodied athletes' occupations provided limited opportunity for contact with disabled people as the majority of the able-bodied athletes performed manual, physical occupations (refer Table 1.). School was one major place where contact had previously occurred, but it was noted by some of the subjects that the contact with disabled people during those school years was not always of a positive nature. In fact, the attitude toward the disabled has changed so much, that those subjects are now remorseful about how they treated the disabled in the past. An example would be, "we would call to them, but it was not always complementary".

The education years are very important in molding peoples' attitudes. As a learning experience, the researcher feels that the inclusion of some wheelchair

basketball in regular school physical education could have a positive affect on the next generation's attitude toward the disabled. Sherrill (1986, p.22) stated, "generally stereotypes are learned from authority figures and tend to be more rigid than beliefs developed on their own". Participation in the sport of wheelchair basketball would combat the attitudes of authority figures by allowing the individual the chance to learn first hand how involved wheelchair sport really is and that it is fun and enjoyable. This area is worthy of further study.

Integration of the able and disabled in such a competition during the school age years may assist in bringing about that change. Fear of the unknown is what drives the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudice. The sport of wheelchair basketball would prove that disability is not contagious and would show how able the disabled really are. Furnham and Thompson (1994) concluded that contact with disabled individuals does have a positive effect on attitudes toward wheelchair users. As mentioned previously, some able-bodied subjects commented that their attitude toward the disabled competitors has changed to the point where they almost felt ashamed of the way they treated the disabled in the past.

Feelings expressed by the disabled subjects indicated that there still seems to be prejudice and stereotyping in the general population toward them. Sherrill (p.23) stated, "...stigmatisation and stereotyping often lead to discrimination". There is almost a decade between this study and Sherrill's statement about attitudes in the United States of America toward the disabled. The current research suggests that today in Western Australia, attitudes toward the disabled are very slowly changing for the better.

The aim of the wheelchair basketball competition is to try and integrate the able and the disabled. The able-bodied subjects see the disabled athletes as normal human beings (refer Table 6.). The overall attitude toward the disabled

athletes, and the disabled in general was positive. When going in for a ball during a game there was no leniency given to an opposition player who was disabled. The able-bodied suggested "the disabled player would probably be insulted if you did".

Similarly the disabled athletes did not pull back when competing for a ball with an able-bodied athlete. The disabled pointed out that it gives them a kick to beat an able-bodied player. The lack of sporting contact through continual parallel competition means that the disabled cannot compete together. To compete and beat an able-bodied athlete on their terms can only be beneficial to the individual's self-esteem and confidence.

Wheelchair basketball provides a great opportunity to practice and perfect the skills required by the disabled to perform many everyday activities with confidence. The better the chair control the greater the mobility and accessibility the individual has. A stick or hole on a path can pose a great obstacle for the wheelchair bound. Balance, control, and practice are essential for the individual to be able to maneuver many common obstacles. The greater the mobility of the individual in everyday situations, the more the disabled would feel able to fit in. This concurs with Monnazzi (1982) who found sports help the disabled individual recover part of his/her life that they had lost.

The rehabilitative effect of sport is unquestionable. Along with the physical activity and practice that is involved, it also allows for socialisation with other disabled and able-bodied individuals. Contact with older, more established people with disabilities shows the person who may have recently been injured that there is life, and sport, after an accident. The disabled confirmed this notion with repeated statements which identified that the players themselves are inspirational. Some players were seen to be far worse off than the sample in this study. For example, one competitor has been amputated from the pelvis down.

Although this can be seen to be a severe disability, he competes for every ball to the best of his ability.

In summary, the able-bodied subjects needed to address their personal biases prior to participation in a disabled sport. The interviews revealed that some able-bodied subjects felt remorse for their past treatment of the disabled. Previous contact with disabled people was very limited or nil. School was given as the main area for integrated contact. School is seen as a prime location for change and wheelchair basketball would be a good medium for that change.

Personal benefits from wheelchair basketball for the disabled sample included better chair skills and a greater self-confidence. The subject's attitude toward each other prior to commencing the sport would have an effect at the perceptions of integration level of the conceptual framework. It should be noted that some people will never change their attitude and would therefore not even contemplate competing in the sport.

Social Acceptance of Wheelchair Basketball.

Sub-question 3. explored how the sport is accepted in the wider community. Social and sporting situations were identified by the researcher as areas where the athletes may explain participation to others. Results indicated that, again, the attitude toward the disabled is fairly poor. The able-bodied subjects commented that reactions to them playing the sport was mostly positive.

The socialisation aspect of sport is well known. Outside the court, there was very little social contact with other able or disabled players, however the majority of the athletes interviewed had only been competing for a short period

of time. The criteria for subject participation in the study required them to have less than two years experience in the sport. According to the literature, sport socialisation varies depending on the length of time elapsed since the advent of the disabling condition and the severity of that disability (Brasile, 1990).

Other socialisation factors were examined by Williams (1994). He found that the onset of disability complicates the picture of sport socialisation. Factors such as significant others, socialising situations, and personal attributes will impact upon the socialisation of the individual. This concurs with Valliant, et al. (1985) who found that interaction with new-found peers provided the necessary incentive to reshape their lives in a positive direction.

Socialisation of athletes with disabilities occurs through the relationships they establish and maintain with others. The difficulty occurs when it comes to determining who are the "others" and who of those are significant. The social setting may also impact upon who the individual can meet. Williams (1994) noted that much socialisation occurs within a group of people with similar disabilities. An example is deaf athletes who socialise mainly with other deaf individuals. The wheelchair basketball setting appears to provide a positive atmosphere for socialisation to occur. The sport brings together people of different abilities and different disabilities. Many do not have an observable disability when they first enter the venue. For example, amputees who walk without aids are not easily recognisable until they remove their prostheses.

The personal attributes of the individual will also affect socialisation of the individual. Onset of disability, severity of the disability, and gender will all have an effect on socialisation. Williams (1994) noted that when a disability is congenital, the individual develops with the disability. Socialisation occurs within specialist groups organised by disability agencies. Wheelchair basketball helps to socialise new individuals in different ways. The integration of male and

female, young and old, all with various disabilities, or with none at all, allows for a more effective atmosphere for socialisation to occur. The result can be seen from the present study.

A limitation of this study was that the subjects had only recently begun to play the sport when the data was collected. The result is that they have had limited contact with people which would have affected their socialisation. The subjects mentioned that although they did not see each other outside the basketball games, at the court they made conversation and everybody was friendly to everyone else. Subjects commented that the atmosphere at the arena was conducive to the development of friendships. This confirms findings of Iso-Ahola and Hatfield (1986) and Schellenberger (1990) which indicated that team sport activities promote friendly and co-operative interaction between players.

Public reaction to the subjects declaring that they participate in the sport varied between the two groups (refer Table 8.). For the able-bodied subjects the main response was often that people had never heard of the sport. Often this was followed by queries about why they participate. Although the responses seem to be negative from the researcher's viewpoint, the reason may be as simple as a lack of public awareness. Integrating able-bodied people into disabled sport provides an avenue for participation into other areas or sports. The general population can then see, through the participation of able-bodied players, that the game is fun and fast. Team sports are very popular. Wheelchair basketball could be a new area for promotion in sporting circles.

Reaction to the disabled subjects telling others that they play basketball was often met with a surprised response. Many stated that the people they tell do not even know the disabled play sport. This may be due to the situation in which they are in, or that responses are taken to be derogatory at the time. An example is, "the disabled play sport?".

In summary, the interviewees stated that there is currently very little socialisation with other players outside the basketball facility. A major reason for this would be the limited opportunity for the individuals to socialise. Many of the subjects had only begun the sport five weeks before the interviews were conducted. Other factors such as significant others, the social setting and personal attributes will affect individual socialisation. The socialisation of the individual would have a direct affect on the conceptual framework in relation to incentives and motivations. If there is no social atmosphere then the athlete may not continue to participate. A positive attitude by other players and a social atmosphere at the facility would encourage people to work through their perceptions of the disabled and hopefully participate.

Reaction to the subject mentioning that they participate in the sport of wheelchair basketball was met with varied responses. The able-bodied subjects noted that people are inquisitive, while the disabled subjects considered that people seemed naive about the disabled even playing sport. The reactions of people in a social setting may have an impact on the overall introduction to wheelchair basketball. If an individual has a negative response from people in the social environment then there is the possibility they would be less likely to want to participate.

Summary

The sport of wheelchair basketball includes able-bodied players in a sport modified for the disabled. The reasons identified by both groups of subjects in this study for participating were similar. Many factors are involved in the decision to participate in the sport. Reasons for participation include fun and enjoyment, and winning. Other players and friends were the main routes for the introduction to the sport.

The able-bodied subjects had little previous contact with the disabled. School was the most common place for such contact and so would be the best place to focus future education about the capabilities of the disabled.

Socially the sport of wheelchair basketball receives mixed reactions. The able-bodied subjects had responses that suggest the sport is not widely known. The disabled subjects suggested that there needs to be more work to promote the disabled in the community.

This study demonstrated that integration is an effective way to promote the disabled into the community. It also shows that sport is an effective medium for this to occur. Benefits for both groups of athletes were identified and suggest that participation helps to break down long standing stereotypes.

Overall, the sport of wheelchair basketball provides a positive social environment for the able and disabled to mix. The results show how the sport has benefits for both groups in relation to learning and gaining respect for each other.

The findings in this study confirm the path of participation identified in the conceptual framework (Figure 2.). The factors which impact at various levels of the framework have been added to Figure 3. For simplicity the factors relevant to the able-bodied are shown on the left-hand side of the diagram while those for the disabled are on the right.

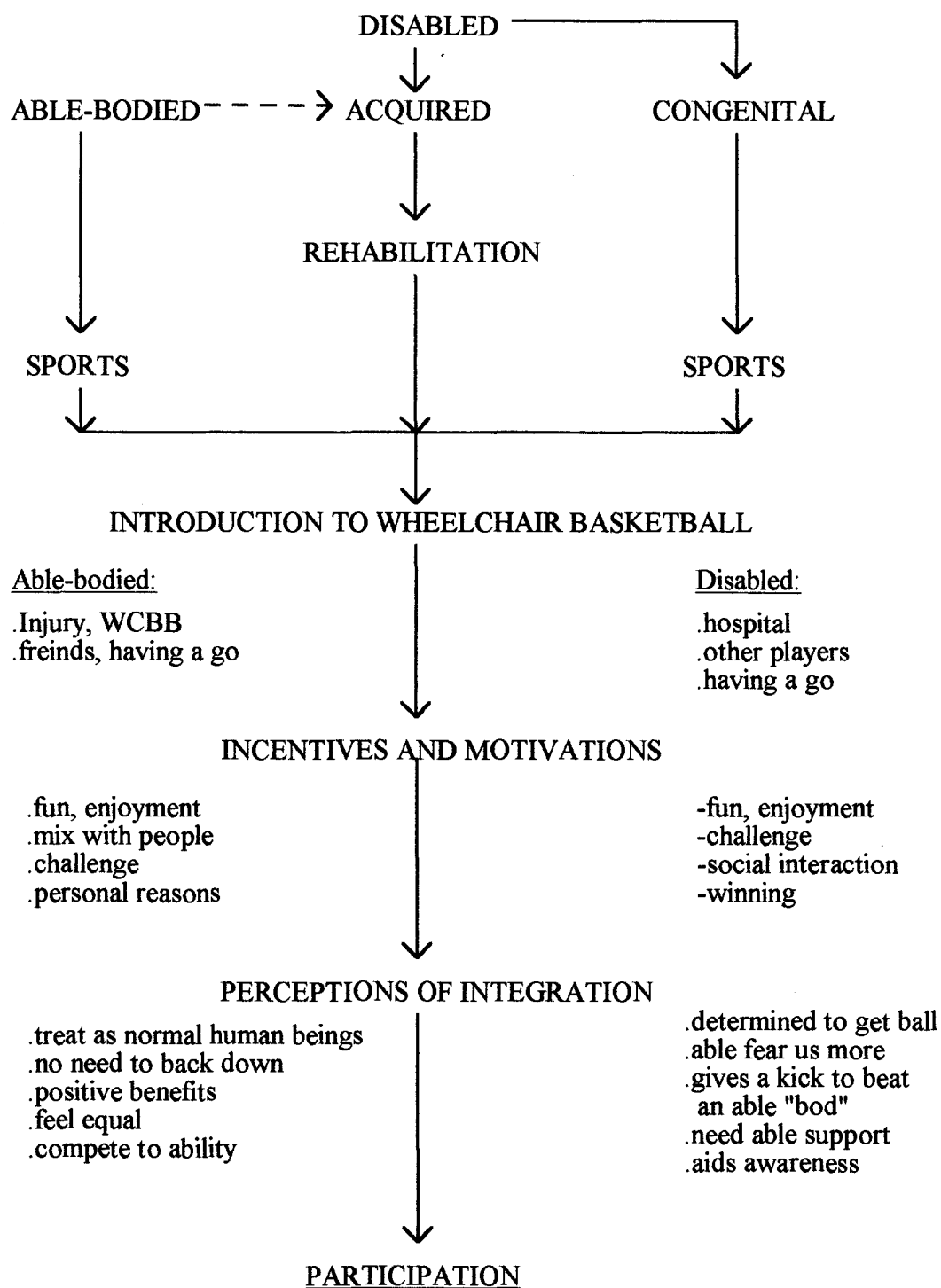


Figure 3. Modified conceptual framework

CHAPTER 6

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study supported previous research findings which suggested that participation in sport is primarily for fun and enjoyment. This study looked at the integration of six able-bodied and six disabled male athletes who participate in wheelchair basketball. By employing qualitative methods of investigation the study provided information from the participants perspective which has largely been neglected by previous research in the area of sport psychology for the disabled. Subjects provided information that show how the sport can be beneficial to both groups. Participation of able-bodied players can be influenced by many factors including previous contact with disabled people, their introduction to the sport, and their perceptions of the disabled.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of integration of wheelchair basketball participants. In so doing it addressed sub-questions relating to why these individuals participate in the sport, how the subjects relate to and accept each other in a reverse integration setting, and how the sport is accepted in the broader community.

Twelve athletes who have been playing the game of wheelchair basketball for less than two years were interviewed. They were asked questions which identified their reasons for participation, acceptance of one another and

benefits that they saw for both groups. Data obtained from the subjects was inductively analysed into categories derived by the researcher.

Common reasons for participation included challenge and competition, with fun and enjoyment being the major incentive for participation from both groups. Fitness was not mentioned by any of the subjects. Winning was the main variation between the sample. The disabled identified winning as having major importance in their participation. This was the only significant ego incentive provided by either group. Ego incentive relates to measuring one's skill against an others (Brasile, et al. 1991).

Each athlete accepted the other for who they are. The able-bodied athletes said they take no notice of disabilities. The disabled were positive toward the able-bodied athletes and enjoyed competing with them. The able-bodied were fully accepted as wheelchair athletes by the disabled. Socialisation in the sport was important, though the short period time the subjects had been participating prior to the study limited the impact that socialising could have on the subjects.

Common benefits between the groups were reduction of stereotypes and proving how able the disabled really are. Interviewees acknowledged that integration in the sport allowed able-bodied people to see the disabled are just as competitive as any athlete. The disabled wanted to win whereas the able-bodied did not mention winning at all.

All the subjects felt the integration of the able and disabled has positive effects on attitudes of people in the community. By allowing the able-bodied to compete with the disabled, they realise that the disabled do not need pity, but respect.

Conclusions

On the basis of this research it can be concluded that participation is affected in many ways. Participation in the sport is fun, and the athletes rely on each other for competition. Integration provides benefits for both groups of athletes. The most common reasons relate to helping break down stereotypes of the disabled as helpless and pitiful. The disabled subjects do not want people to feel sorry for them. Sport was seen to be an effective means of proving that the disabled are able to do many things, and do them well. No able-bodied subject believed they could be as good in a wheelchair as a disabled athlete without a lot of practice.

Results suggest that the integration of the two groups is a good way to promote the sport in the able-bodied community. School was seen to be the most accessible area to promote the sport. The socialisation aspect of the sport through bringing different people together was seen to be a major part of gaining respect for the athletes.

The qualitative method used in this study represents an effective way to gather meaningful data about the perceptions of integration of able-bodied and disabled wheelchair basketballers. It allowed the athletes to identify the most important issues to them, the benefits they see, and the improvements to society that integration can produce.

Recommendations

This study contributed to the body of knowledge on the effects of integration on athletes in wheelchair basketball from the players' perspectives

rather than the researcher's. It has identified the reasons for participation, the subject's perceptions of able and disabled athletes, and has provided the benefits that the participants feel result from the sport.

Limitations exist in the interpretation of the findings including the small sample size and more probing questions. It is acknowledged that participant observation by the researcher may have been beneficial to this study by expanding his experience of the sport.

This research provided the athletes with the opportunity to express their feelings about the integration of able and disabled athletes in wheelchair basketball. Results indicated that both groups are very positive toward the competition and believe that more should be done in other areas of sport and society. With greater able-bodied involvement, the stereotype of the helpless disabled individual is slowly being affected.

Research in the area of sport for the disabled was found to be fairly limited. The following recommendations focus on disabled sport which would provide information on how effective the integration of able and disabled is over a range of ages and sports. Future research in this area should:

1. Investigate the gender differences between male and female, able and disabled competitors in an integrated sport.
2. Examine junior participation of able and disabled showing the effects of time on sport continuation.
3. Consider how the individual is socialised through the sport, using the social support systems and how sport affects this socialisation.
4. Measure the effects of psychological training techniques on various wheelchair athletes in relation to their effectiveness.

5. Monitor the effectiveness of coaching techniques considering the relationships which develop between the coach and athlete in an integrated sport.
6. Focus on the participation motivation of able and disabled athletes in a range of other sports.

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APPENDIX A

Introduction Letter

<Date>

<Subject Name>

<Address>

<Address>

<Address> <Post Code>

Dear <Subject>,

As previously discussed, I am seeking your assistance in a research project on Participation of Able and Disabled Athletes in a Combined Wheelchair Basketball Competition. This project is part of my Honours degree in a Bachelor of Applied Science (Sport Science) at Edith Cowan University. My interest is in the area of Sport Psychology and more specifically, the disabled athlete in sport.

I have had previous experience in the disabled sporting area through University course work and as a volunteer helper. I have found the area to be personally interesting and challenging. I am looking at the question of how do the athletes feel in a combined wheelchair competition, their reactions and responses to the other athletes, as well as themselves.

To obtain the information I require for the project, I will need to interview the athlete, who is essentially seen as a beginner (less than two years experience). From previous discussion with you or other members of the Wheelchair Association, I feel that you would be desirable as a participant in this study. I hope you agree to be involved in this research.

Your participation would consist of one interview which with your permission will be tape recorded and transcribed in full. The interview will consist of around twenty questions and last less than 30 minutes. You may review the transcripts prior to analysis.

The information collected from this research will be reported in a thesis, and hopefully sections of the paper may be published. The aim is to help coaches, sporting and other organisations in response to participation and for integration.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be assured at all times. Subjects identity will be masked by coding and thus only identifiable to the researcher.

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the enclosed 'Consent Form' and return it in the envelope provided. I will contact you by phone in the near future and make further arrangements and answer any questions.

If you feel there may be emotional tension from this area of discussion, counseling assistance would be recommended in a convenient location. At any stage of the research you may withdraw with no obligation.

If you have any questions or require further clarification regarding the study, please contact me or the project supervisor, Dr. Lynn Embrey, during business hours at ECU

Thank you for your consideration of assisting with this research project.

Yours Sincerely

Kym Hoonhout

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent Form

**PARTICIPATION OF ABLE AND DISABLED
ATHLETES IN A COMBINED WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL
COMPETITION**

THESIS PROJECT

BY

KYM HOONHOUT

Bachelor of Applied Science

(Sports Science) Honors

Edith Cowan University

DISCLOSURE AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I _____ (Participant's name) have had sufficient information provided for me about confidentiality, anonymity, and use of the data for the thesis study on Wheelchair Basketball Competition. I agree to participate in this research, realising that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that the data collected from this interview may be presented in written form provided I am not identifiable.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ (Participant)

Signature: _____ Date: _____ (Researcher)

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide for the Able-bodied Subjects

Interview guide for the able-bodied subjects.

Preferred location found. Set up of equipment.

Permission to record requested. Confidentiality assured.

Two part interview discussed. Pre test and coding of equipment performed.

Interview begins:

- 1) Can you tell me when and where were you born?
- 2) Are there any other members of your family?
 - brothers or sisters : older or younger
- 3) Have you had any contact with disabled persons during your school years or during work commitments?
 - how were they accepted by you and others
 - how were they accepted in school
- 4) Can you tell me what you have done since leaving school?
 - trips, jobs, lifestyle
- 5) What would you like to achieve professionally and in sporting competitions?
- 6) Can you describe what other sports you have been involved with and how you felt playing them?
 - how did you get involved in those
- 7) Can you describe your first experience with a wheelchair?
 - WCBB first contact
- 8) How has your experience changed over time?

- 9) Can you describe why you participate in this combined WCBB competition?
- fun, competition, enjoyment, exercise
 - how do you feel about combined competition
 - how is this accepted by people in social settings
- 10) If others have influenced your participation, who and how have they influenced you?
- family, doctor, friends
- 11) Can you tell me about the team you currently play with and how do you feel about the disabled in that team?
- how many able/disabled
- 12) Can you explain what you see is the aim of WCBB for you?
- achievement, fun, exercise, challenge
 - acceptance self/society
- 13) Can you describe how you feel about playing against the disabled players?
- 14) Is there anything you would like to see done to improve the competition?
- 15) How do you feel in the off season, or when you are unable to play?
- keep in contact with team mates
- 16) Are there any other combined team sports you would try, and what are they?
- anything that can be modified
- 17) Can you explain integration in your own words?
- how would you define it
- 18) Can you tell me about the people who come to watch you play?
- freinds, family
- 19) How long do you expect to play the game and would you recommend it to people you meet?
- how would you describe the sport in a promotional sense

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide for Disabled Subjects

Disabled Interview Guide.

Preferred location found. Set up of equipment.

Permission to record requested. Confidentiality assured.

Two part interview discussed. Pre test and coding of equipment performed.

Interview begins:

- 1) Can you tell me when and where were you born?
- 2) Are there any other members of your family?
 - brothers or sisters : older or younger
- 3) Did you have any contact with any other disabled people during your school years or at work?
 - how were you accepted with your disability
- 4) Can you tell me what you have done or achieved since leaving school?
 - trips, jobs, lifestyle
- 5) What would you like to achieve professionally and sporting?
- 6) What other sports have you been involved with?
- 7) Can you describe your first experience with a wheelchair?
 - rehab or all life
- 8) How has your experience changed over time?
- 9) Can you describe why you participate in this combined WCBB competition?
 - fun, competition, enjoyment, exercise, rehab
 - how feel about combined competition
 - how is this accepted by people in social settings

10) If others have influenced your participation, who and how have they influenced you?

- family, doctor, friends

11) Tell me about the people who come to watch you play?

12) Can you explain what you see is the aim of WCBB for you?

- achievement, fun, exercise, challenge, goals

- acceptance self/society

13) Can you describe how you feel about playing with and against the able bodied players?

14) Is there anything you would like to see done to improve the competition?

15) Can you describe how you feel during the off season, or when you are unable to play?

16) Are there any other combined sports you would like to try and what are they?

17) Can you define integration in your own words?

- explain it

18) Can you tell me about the people who come to watch you play?

19) How long do you expect to play the game and would you recommend it to other people you meet?

APPENDIX E

Sample of Interview Transcription

Sub: My chair skills? Ohh yeah. Before this season started I had only played 3 or 4 games WCBB socially, so yeah my skills have improved the same as anybody that has just started at a sport your skills progress at a geometric progression in the early stages, though I hope to get a lot better before it starts to level off.

K: So do you see the disabled as having an advantage over the able-bodies purely on chair skills?

Sub: Ohh, absolutely, absolutely. Last night I played BB and umm when I got in the clear I got in a frenzy and pushed three times, I got pulled for travel I don't know how many times but it was a hell of a lot. Umm, but as I say to the other people on the team, " I'm disabled, you people are used to this". They know how to bounce a ball, steer, push, turn, everything, stop, all with just two hands. I need more than just two hands to be able to do all that. And see in the same way I can walk without thinking about it they can move without thinking about it.

K: So can describe why you participate in the combined WCBB competition?

Sub: First and foremost, because the few social games I had when I was down at the camp last year, I thoroughly enjoyed, I though this is about as much fun I have had on a sporting field, that is the primary reason. Secondary I want to show my son that WCBB is not second place, its not just something you play because you cant run, umm and I don't want him to think of it like that, and I reckon leading from the front foot is probably the best way to do it.

APPENDIX F.

Coding of Transcript

ABLE-BODIED SUBJECT: AB4 (page 4 of 10)

K: So how is it accepted in social settings when you tell them you play WCBB?

Sub: Ohh umm, they kind of like 'what', laugh, and umm I tell them a bit about it and they reckon it sounds like pretty good fun, but umm, I couldn't see anybody that I have told about it going for it at work, but, in the group of friends that play BB, there was quite a bit of interest shown in it. They are going to come down and have a look. It is sort of a mixed reaction I suppose.

K: Nothing negative?

Sub: No I haven't heard anything negative, but no, the people that I work with and my friends are fairly open minded, broad minded sort of people too.

K: If others have influenced your participation who and how have they influenced you?

Sub: Umm, the people that have influenced me would be a few friends and their children at the camp, umm, but the biggest influence was when I hopped in a chair and had a go. On average I was probably 10 years younger than most of the other people in the chairs for the first time so I ran rings around them not to blow my own horn or nothing. The other people there did not seem to have the will to win quite as much as I do, I have that will in everything I do, you know.

K: So can you tell me about the team you currently play for and how you feel about any disabled players on your team?

Sub: Umm the team I play with consists of 1 who has a spina bif child, 1 who has a spina bif brother, both are able bodied, 2 disabled males, 2 disabled females, none of whom I had met before except for Linda who is a close friend.